



Fall 2021

# TAKE CARE

## HEALTHY TIPS FOR FALL

Did you know that being connected to others and feeling supported is one of the best forms of stress relief? We are all feeling the stress of enduring the ongoing challenges we have faced over the last 18 months. Be kind to yourself. Treat yourself as you would a close friend. Reach out to others and try to really listen; as often, listening is the kindest and most needed thing you can do for someone else.



## Stress Management: Create a Plan

As teens, it is key to prepare to manage life's challenges in healthy ways if we are to thrive in an unpredictable world. Stress affects mood and causes physical discomfort. Stress management helps manage feelings and leads to growth, better health, and even improves relationships. But before **taking action**, it's important to figure out the cause of stress.

### START PLAN

#### WHAT CAUSES STRESS?

Stress is caused by the release of certain hormones in response to feeling threatened, afraid, or nervous. When stressed, the body floods with hormones that lead to physical symptoms including sweating, increased heart rate, or difficulty thinking logically and clearly. This is because the body is preparing the best way to escape the threat. Historically, the stress response system was beneficial to humans. When prehistoric humans saw a tiger in the wild, their stress response kicked into gear. Those individuals with a high-functioning system often escaped danger.

Some stress can be a good thing. A small amount of stress focuses attention and enhances performance. Stress can even save lives. Genuinely life-threatening crises send the mind and body into survival mode, preparing it to escape when necessary.

The problem is that the stress-response system was not designed for today's world. In simplest terms, humans are designed to run from tigers. The rational part of the brain shuts down when it's the time to escape. It does not stop to negotiate. Nor does the part of the brain that allows us to feel or to relate to others function at its best. We are not supposed to think about the tiger's feelings as it prepares to attack.

But most modern-day stressors are not tigers — they aren't real threats. When the same stress response occurs after a mild stressor that is not really dangerous (e.g. a job interview, an exam, or an argument with a parent) it can be destructive.

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The Children's Health Foundation is a non-profit organization that partners with your Pediatrician to develop quality health care programs in our community. We work together to foster the highest quality care for children, to raise awareness on health issues, and to achieve better children's health outcomes. Please ask your provider for more information.

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## STRESS BIOLOGY 101

When the stress response system is fully activated, the body feels it immediately. It experiences butterflies as the blood quickly shifts to muscles that want to run. The heart beats fast so it can pump blood. Breathing intensifies to oxygenate that blood. Sweating allows the body to cool off, and pupils are dilated to remain alert. An understanding of stress biology is key to stress management. Once you understand what's stressing you and how your body may react, then you can create strategies to address it in a healthy way — also known as coping.

## MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES

Some of the best and most positive strategies to address stress may take work or practice. On the other hand, some negative coping strategies offer near instant relief, making them attractive. A number of these quick fixes include drinking, drug use, self-mutilation, sexual behaviors, thrill-seeking, and unhealthy eating patterns to name a few. They may offer fleeting relief, but they can be dangerous. They can lead to lower self-esteem, conflict in relationships, and poor performance in school. And this just adds to the stress, creating more need to escape.

It's important to remember there are choices. Healthy choices offer the ability to gain control and resolve issues.

## BUILD A STRESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

As you begin building a stress management plan, consider how to think realistically about the problem at hand. That way, you can **figure out what's stressing you out**. And understand there is no stress management strategy more powerful than reaching out for support from others.

Once you've determined the problem, it's time to make your plan. A strong stress management plan includes four broad categories. Each category includes different strategies to manage stress. Pick strategies you think will work best for your situation. By reading through to the different strategies you can learn even more about putting each strategy into place.

## CATEGORY 1: PROBLEM SOLVING

### IDENTIFY AND THEN TACKLE THE PROBLEM

Sometimes, when you identify the source of stress, it can feel overwhelming. You may feel unable to address the problem. To get past that feeling, divide it into smaller pieces and manage one piece at a time. For example, you can make lists and timelines, and then identify a strategy from your plan to address each part of the problem.

### AVOID WHAT STRESSES YOU OUT WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Life is hard enough without having to deal with things that can be avoided. Bypass, rather than confront, problems when it is safe and wise to do so. **Avoiding people, places, and things that trigger emotions** can be an act of tremendous strength.

### CONSERVE ENERGY

Instead of devoting energy to worrying about things you can't change, **channel your energy differently**. Focus on problems that can be fixed!

## CATEGORY 2: MAINTAIN HEALTHY BODIES

### THE POWER OF EXERCISE

Stress hormones prepare the body to run or fight. They put the mind into a survival-only mode which makes it hard to focus, think clearly, and problem-solve. When the body is stressed and doesn't get exercise, it's left feeling as if it needs to run from danger. Exercise literally runs out those hormones. **Exercise is also tightly linked to better physical health and contributes to mental and emotional well-being.**

## LEARNING TO REALLY RELAX

Sometimes it's impossible to run away from a problem. **Active relaxation strategies** can help the mind regain focus and be a first step to problem-solving. Relaxation, just for its own sake, **also contributes to mental, physical, and emotional health.**

## GOOD NUTRITION AND EATING WELL

**Proper nutrition** is essential to a healthy body, a clear mind, and managing stress.

## SLEEP WELL

**Proper sleep** is important to stress management because exhausted people cannot solve problems effectively. Whether a lack of sleep comes from poor sleep habits or stress, the brain and the body both benefit from breaking a cycle of sleeplessness.

## CATEGORY 3: MANAGING EMOTIONS

### TAKE INSTANT VACATIONS

Healthy escapes prevent the mind and body from needing to turn to dangerous, quick fixes. Take breaks from stress by **taking advantage of the imagination**. Focus the mind on something other than the problem at hand. Choose activities and practices that don't permit other thoughts to intrude.

### RELEASING EMOTIONS

It is important to **learn to express emotions** so they don't build up inside. A bit of stress is energizing and can enhance performance. Too much stress can be paralyzing. Learn the benefits of expressing feelings and emotions.

## CATEGORY 4: GIVING BACK

### CONTRIBUTE TO KNOW HOW MUCH YOU MATTER

Contribution to others, the community, and the larger society pays off in many ways. It feels good to serve. It's empowering to make a difference.

**Giving back** makes it easier to ask for help in times of need because you learn first-hand that people find joy in giving, they do not serve out of pity. Giving back to others teaches that if you are ever in need of help, it's okay to ask and receive it without feeling shame.

### GET STARTED

Now that you understand the causes of stress and range of ways to cope with and manage it, it's time to get started! Create a plan so you're prepared with a healthy range of options to face life's stressful situations. Pick and choose strategies that work for you. These strategies will help you manage problems today and will serve you over a lifetime.

## STRESS MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR TEENS

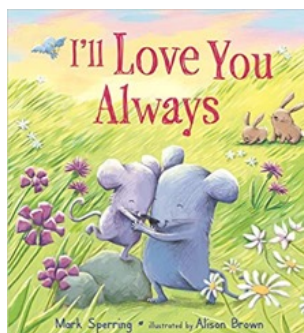
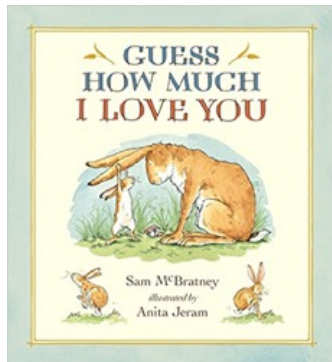
### CREATE YOUR OWN STRESS MANAGEMENT PLAN TODAY!

The full plan is published by The American Academy of Pediatrics in **Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings**. This article was written by former CPTC interns Nora Laberee, Shannon Traurig, and Amber Williams.

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# Book Recommendations

**Pediatrician recommended books (& classics) to build parent child attachment and prepare for Kindergarten Readiness.**



## Healthy Sleep Habits Tips from the AAP

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports the AASM guidelines and encourages parents to make sure their children develop good sleep habits right from the start.

Source American Academy of Pediatrics (© 2016), [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

**Make sufficient sleep a family priority.** Understand the importance of getting enough sleep and how sleep affects the overall health of you and your children. Remember that you are a role model to your child; set a good example. Staying up all night with your teen to edit his or her paper or pulling an all-nighter for work yourself isn't really sending the right message. Making sleep a priority for yourself shows your children that it's part of living a healthy lifestyle—like eating right and exercising regularly.

**Keep to a regular daily routine.** The same waking time, meal times, nap time, and play times will help your child feel secure and comfortable, and help with a smooth bedtime. For young children, it helps to start early with a bedtime routine such as brush, book, bed. Make sure the sleep routines you use can be used anywhere, so you can help your child get to sleep wherever you may be.

**Be active during the day.** Make sure your kids have interesting and varied activities during the day, including physical activity and fresh air.

*(continued on back page)*

## Help make COVID-19 testing easier for kids

- 1 **Make sure your kids know** what COVID-19 is and why they're getting tested.
- 2 **Explain what the process** will look like.
- 3 **Make a plan with your kids** about what to do during the test. Ask what they can do to stay still, like hugging a stuffed animal.
- 4 Explain to them **how you'll find out the results of the test.**
- 5 Let your children know that **they'll have to quarantine if they test positive.** Reassure them that you'll make sure their needs are met while they're at home.



## Mental health in young children

### Signs of stress in young children

#### Preschool age

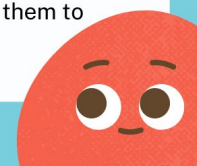
- Crying or screaming
- Afraid to separate from parents or caregivers
- Not eating or losing weight
- Having nightmares

#### Elementary school age

- Feeling guilt or shame
- Trouble concentrating
- Not sleeping well

### How parents and caregivers can help

- Be calm and reassuring
- Talk to children about what is happening in a way they can understand
- Provide children with opportunities to talk about what they are experiencing. Encourage them to share their concerns; ask questions





## Nutritious Nibbles



### Indian Lentils

In India, lentils and rice are everyday foods for millions of people. Lentils are inexpensive, nutritious, and can be prepared in a multitude of ways. Enjoy these flavorful lentils with carrot rice pilaf, chapatis, and a mango fruit salad.

#### Ingredients

Serves 4 to 6

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ teaspoon cumin seed or ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons ground red chile
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- 2 (15-ounce) cans lentils
- 4 medium tomatoes, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro leaves

#### Instructions

1. In a saucepan, melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and cumin and sauté until fragrant, but not brown. Add the chile and coriander and stir for 20 seconds more.
2. Stir in the lentils with their juice, tomatoes, and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer 5 to 10 minutes, uncovered. Remove from the heat and cover.
3. Just before serving, stir in the cilantro. Traditionally, lentils are spooned over rice and served in bowls.

Recipe Source: [www.cookingwithkids.org](http://www.cookingwithkids.org)

## AUTUMN WORD SEARCH

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leaves  
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october  
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pumpkin  
raking  
red  
scarecrow  
september  
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## Healthy Sleep Habits *(continued from page 3)*

**Monitor screen time.** The AAP recommends keeping all screens—TVs, computers, laptops, tablets, and phones out of children's bedrooms, especially at night. To prevent sleep disruption, turn off all screens at least 60 minutes/1 hour before bedtime. Create a Family Media Use Plan and set boundaries about use before bedtime.

### Create a sleep-supportive and safe bedroom and home environment.

Dim the lights prior to bedtime and control the temperature in the home. Don't fill up your child's bed with toys. Keep your child's bed a place to sleep, rather than a place to play. One or two things—a favorite doll or bear, a security blanket—are okay and can help ease separation anxiety.

### Realize that teens require more sleep, not less.

Sleep-wake cycles begin to shift up to two hours later at the start of puberty. At the same time, most high schools require students to get to school earlier and earlier. The AAP has been advocating for middle and high schools delay the start of class to 8:30 a.m. or later. It is important that parents and local school boards work together to implement high school start times that allow teens to get the healthy sleep they need.

### Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle of juice, milk, or formula.

Water is okay. Anything other than water in the bottle can cause baby bottle tooth decay. Feed or nurse your baby, and then put him or her down to sleep.

**Don't start giving solids before about 6 months of age.** Starting solid food sooner will not help your baby sleep through the night. In fact, if you give your baby solids before their system can digest them, he or she may sleep worse because of a tummy ache.

**Avoid overscheduling.** In addition to homework, many children today have scheduled evening activities (i.e., sports games, lessons, appointments, etc.) that pose challenges to getting a good night's sleep. Take time to wind down and give your children the downtime that they need.

### Learn to recognize sleep problems.

The most common sleep problems in children include difficulty falling asleep, nighttime awakenings, snoring, stalling and resisting going to bed, sleep apnea, and loud or heavy breathing while sleeping.

### Talk to your child's teacher or childcare provider about your child's alertness during the day.

Sleep problems may manifest in the daytime, too. A child with not enough, or poor-quality sleep may have difficulty paying attention or "zoning out" in school. Let your child's teacher know that you want to be made aware of any reports of your child falling asleep in school, as well as any learning or behavior problems.

### Talk to your child's pediatrician about sleep.

Discuss your child's sleep habits and problems with your pediatrician, as most sleep problems are easily treated. He or she may ask you to keep a sleep log or have additional suggestions.